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Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

Dissemination of information on decolonization during the period from June 2005 to March 2006

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in paragraph 2 of its resolution 60/118, considered that it was important to continue and expand its efforts to ensure the widest possible dissemination of information on decolonization, with particular emphasis on the options available for the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories. In paragraph 3 of that resolution, it requested the Department of Public Information to take measures through all media available, including publications, radio, television and the Internet, to publicize the work of the United Nations in the field of decolonization. The present report, prepared in response to that mandate, covers the activities undertaken by the Department in the field of decolonization during the reporting period, from June 2005 to March 2006.

2. The activities of the Department pertaining to decolonization continued to focus on the coverage of the work of the General Assembly and the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. The Department conducted media outreach both at Headquarters and through the network of United Nations information centres, and strengthened the use of the Internet for the widest possible dissemination of information.

3. The Department undertook intensive media outreach to promote the significance of the referendum in Tokelau on free association with New Zealand in February 2006. It issued a background press release, which was carried by three major wire services — Reuters, Associated Press and Agence France-Presse — and formed the basis for stories by all the Department's public information outlets, such as radio, the Internet-based news service and the Spokesman's daily briefings. The Department monitored the progress of the referendum and reported thereon to the

06-28843 (E) 200406

media as it unfolded. Major news wires, the regional media and BBC, among others, reported on the progress and the final result of the referendum. The Department's News Centre and United Nations Radio carried news throughout the referendum process. The online site for internal communications for United Nations staff managed by the Department (iSeek) also highlighted the referendum with text and photos.

II. Coverage of issues before the General Assembly

4. The Department continued to publicize the work of the United Nations in the field of decolonization through the issuance of 33 press releases in English and French, on the relevant meetings of the General Assembly, the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) and the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. All press releases were also posted on the United Nations website, where they are available to a global audience.

5. Over the past year, the Public Inquiries Unit of the Department of Public Information responded to queries from the public concerning decolonization. Most of those submitting queries were referred to online documentation.

6. The topic of decolonization, including the role of the Trusteeship Council and of the Special Committee, was regularly included in the Department's guided tour of United Nations Headquarters. The topic was also included in the training of new guides and in the guides' daily briefings. Using the set of maps outside the Security Council, on the tour route, that shows the location of the 16 Non-Self-Governing territories, guides briefed visitors about the referendum in Tokelau as it unfolded.

III. United Nations Radio and Television

7. The Radio Section of the Department of Public Information continued to cover decolonization and related issues in its daily news programmes and current affairs magazines, in both official and non-official languages, for regional and worldwide dissemination.

8. Topics reported on included the Special Committee's discussion of the case of Puerto Rico and its support for its right to self-determination; Polisario's asking Spain to cancel flights to El Aaiún; the Secretary-General's statement that the United Nations faces new challenges at its sixtieth anniversary; and the discussion of the Falklands Islands (Malvinas) issue and the urging of conversations between Argentina and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in that regard.

9. United Nations Radio broadcast news stories on the referendum in Tokelau. It also covered the Caribbean regional seminar on decolonization, held in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in May 2005.

10. United Nations Radio regularly covered issues concerning Western Sahara. The Arabic Radio Unit, in particular, reported on the issue every time it was discussed in the Security Council, both in news programming and in daily features.

IV. Publications

11. During the reporting period, the Department's quarterly magazine *UN Chronicle* covered the issue of decolonization in its issue 4, 2005, featuring the sixtieth session of the General Assembly, in particular the discussions in the Fourth Committee.

12. United Nations activities regarding decolonization during the reporting period will be described in the fifty-ninth (2005) and sixtieth (2006) volumes of the *Yearbook of the United Nations*, which are currently in preparation. Both volumes will cover decolonization in the chapter entitled "Other political and security questions" and will include the full texts of resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council concerning decolonization. Accounts will be provided of the activities of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples in such areas as dissemination of information on self-determination options, implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, and economic and other activities affecting the interests of Non-Self-Governing Territories, in addition to a review of the situation in individual territories. The fifty-eighth (2004) volume of the *Yearbook*, which will be completed by 31 May 2006, also includes this coverage.

V. Internet

13. A wide array of developments and issues related to decolonization continued to be covered regularly on the United Nations News Centre page, one of the most frequently visited pages on the United Nations website. Stories related to decolonization were also distributed through the English- and French-language e-mail news service to over 40,000 subscribers worldwide, and were picked up by a growing number of external websites, including those of media outlets and non-governmental organizations. The News Centre carried news on the referendum in Tokelau as well as the address by the Deputy Secretary-General to the organizational session of the Special Committee.

VI. United Nations information services in Geneva and Vienna and other information centres

14. During the period under review, the United Nations information services in Geneva and Vienna drew attention to the successful work of the United Nations in the field of decolonization, highlighting the work of the Trusteeship Council and the Special Committee as well as recent developments in Tokelau, particularly through its public relations activities in the form of the regular guided tours for visitors.

15. The information services and information centres around the world also carried important reports on their websites in a variety of languages, on the Security Council, the Special Committee, the Fourth Committee and human rights and other bodies relating to decolonization and the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

16. The website of the information service in Geneva, for example, posted the press releases of statements made by human rights officials relating to decolonization; provided coverage of meetings on the subject at the annual session of the Commission on Human Rights, including the discussion of the right of peoples to self-determination, and in its subcommission and the Geneva-based human rights treaty bodies; and reproduced and reissued press releases received from New York.

17. The United Nations Information Centre in Sydney, which also covers a number of States in the South Pacific region, undertook media outreach and monitored the news reporting in that country and in the region on the recent referendum in Tokelau.